DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 265 286 CE 043 048

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TITLE School to Work, Transitioning Services in Northern Arizona. A Study of High School and VR Programs for Adolescent Disabled Individuals.
INSTITUTION Northern Arizona Univ., Flagstaff. Inst. for Human Development.
PUB DATE [86]
NOTE 65p.; Portions of questionnaires contain broken type.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; Agency Cooperation; *Disabilities; Educational Needs; *Education Work Relationship; *Institutional Cooperation; Mainstreaming; *Outcomes of Education; Secondary Education; *Vocational Education; Vocational Followup; *Vocational Rehabilitation
IDENTIFIERS *Arizona (North)

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to identify and describe transitioning of disabled adolescent students from public school programs to community life and the world of work in northern Arizona. Public school personnel and vocational rehabilitation counselors were interviewed in order to obtain information on the types of vocational training and work experience offered, interagency cooperative efforts, the kinds of handicapped students being served, and barriers to effective transitioning. Interviews with 38 persons from public high schools and vocational rehabilitation offices in northern Arizona showed that the school districts appear to be serving predominantly mildly handicapped students in regular vocational education programs. Although very little special programming occurs for this population, and despite the fact that interagency coordination of resources is occurring at a minimal level, districts are reporting a high degree of success in post-school employment status of their handicapped population. Even more severely handicapped students appear to benefit because of their small numbers. Few adolescents were served by vocational rehabilitation agencies. The study concluded that vocational rehabilitation and schools need to increase cooperation, and that schools should increase parental involvement in the vocational planning process. Other recommedndations include a network of summer jobs for the disabled, coordination of vocational assessment, and more awareness of transitioning services. A bibliography and the interview questionnaires are appended. (KC)

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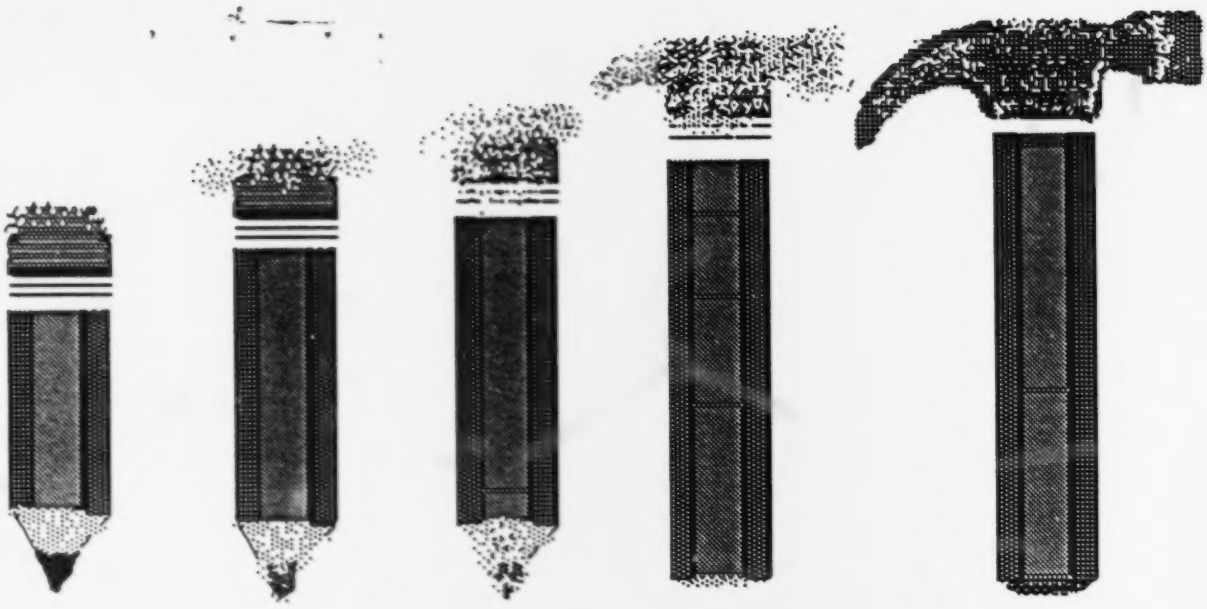

School to Work

Transitioning Services in Northern Arizona

A study of High School and VR programs for adolescent disabled individuals

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Introduction

Today's graduating, disabled high school students represent the first generation of special education students to benefit from the guaranteed right to a free and appropriate public school education as mandated by Public Law 94-142. As special education students exit the public school system and enter community life, educators have focused their attention on what many consider to be the ultimate test of P.L. 94-142---the employment outcomes of disabled students (Bellamy, 1985; Cobb & Larkin, 1982; Edgar, 1985; Hasazi, Gordon, & Roe, 1985; Will, 1984).

Transitioning is the term that has been adopted by professionals in the field to imply the period of time in a young person's life that includes high school, the point of graduation, additional post-secondary or adult services, and the initial years of employment (Will, 1984). Although various agencies accept responsibility for specific phases of the handicapped person's education, job preparation, and work placement, no single agency has the resources, expertise, or the mandate to take the handicapped student from academic and vocational preparation through job placement and follow-up (Ashby & Bensberg, 1981; Ballantyne, 1984; Baumeier, Welsh, & Mohr, 1978; Christian, 1982; Ferrini, Matthews, Foster, & Workman, 1980; Hippolitus & Bergman, 1983; Sigelman, 1982; Tindall, 1981, 1982; Will, 1984). Interagency cooperation has been identified as the process by which community resources can best be used to facilitate the transitioning of disabled high school students from school to work (Baumeier, Walsh, & Cook, 1976; Baumeier, Walsh, & Mohr, 1978; Christian, 1982; Parrish, Kok, & McNelly, 1982; Sigelman, 1982).

The dimension of the problem is striking when the national statistics are addressed. Between 50% and 80% of disabled adults are jobless (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1983; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982). Of the more than

220 million people in the U.S., 30 million are disabled in one way or another. Of this number, over 11 million are potentially employable, yet only 4.1 million are employed. The cost of this in terms of dollars is high, and getting higher. In 1983 approximately 8% of the gross national product was spent on disability programs. In 1979 over $114 billion per year was spent on disability benefits for unemployed persons.

Those who are successful in receiving vocational services often experience low wages, with 52% receiving $2000 per year, and 85% receiving under $7000 per year. Statistics clearly indicate post-school unemployment, and idleness for handicapped persons is a critical issue (Cobb & Larkin, 1982; Ianacone & Tilson, 1983; Razeghi & Davis, 1979; U.S. Department of the Labor, 1979; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1983; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982; White House Working Group on Disability Policy, 1983; Will, 1984).

Interagency Cooperative Agreements

In order to address the employment needs of disabled adults, as well as improve the outcomes for special education students upon leaving the school system, interagency cooperative efforts have proliferated across the country, with varying degrees of success. Interagency cooperation may be defined as coordination among agencies that capitalizes upon the existing expertise of the personnel working in all agencies dealing with handicapped persons (Holmes & Omvig, 1975). Three primary agencies involved with the interagency cooperative efforts are special education, vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation (Ashby & Bensberg, 1981). While there are many commonalities shared by these agencies, the most outstanding is the common goal of enabling disabled persons to live in the mainstream of American life as much as possible. State and local efforts have attempted to maximize the similar, yet diverse, goals, mandates and resources of the three agencies in an attempt to

improve the effectiveness and efficiency of each program, eliminate duplication of services, and lessen the impact of funding limitations (Ashby, 1982).

Much of the past literature on transitioning addressed the nature and effectiveness of interagency cooperative agreements for increasing interagency cooperation. Hippolitus & Bergman (1983) noted that in 1983 twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia had state level interagency agreements. Elsewhere it has been noted that almost all fifty states have some form of formal interagency agreement (Albright, Hasazi, Phelps, & Hull, 1981; Parrish, Kok, & McNelly, 1982). Many of these, however, were prepared prior to the most recent attention to interagency cooperation and are not universally applied or effective (Albright, 1981).

Effectiveness of Cooperative Agreements. Hippolitus and Bergman (1983) reported that the existence of a state level cooperative agreement was found to have a moderate positive influence on service delivery at the local level. The areas of interagency cooperation found to be most affected were inservice training, curriculum and program strategies, and the sharing of resources and data. State agreements delineating a minimum of specific cooperative activities brought about changes in basic operations (pooling of funds and materials). Very detailed state agreements tended to impact more sophisticated areas such as IEP's and IWRP's. When local agreements existed along with state level agreements, Hippolitus and Bergman reported that interagency cooperative efforts increased by a ratio of 5 to 1. It was found that state level cooperative agreements acted as a catalyst, while local level agreements serve as the implementors.

Ballantyne (1984) found that the existence of a state level agreement was not a prerequisite to the success of cooperative programs. The greatest success in cooperative efforts was identified for those states whose agreements

preserved local initiative and flexibility. Other authors have reported that administrative leadership and commitment to linkages were critical to interagency success (Ashby & Bensberg, 1981; Christian, 1982; Phelps, 1981; Tindall, 1982). Additionally, it has been widely recognized that an individual or committee is needed to lead and facilitate the collaborative effort (Ballantyne, 1984; Tindall, 1982).

Barriers to effective interagency cooperation. Some barriers to interagency cooperation have been identified by numerous researchers. A statewide survey conducted by Brown and Kyser (1982) identified the high degree of variance among school districts of various sizes and regions, and that agency attempts at articulating and dealing with these differences are not always based on carefully defined student needs. These authors also identified that some confusion exists over the transfer of information between agencies.

Ballantyne (1984) noted that barriers to collaboration resulted from a lack of familiarity with different agency mandates, policies, and job responsibilities. In addition it was found that vocational assessment was an area of concern and confusion to education personnel, and that much duplication of services occurred in this area. Other difficulties identified by Ballantyne dealt with problems related to a state level mandate for interagency cooperation. Local level personnel may feel that their unique needs are not appreciated. Local rivalry may also cause problems with collaboration, though this tends to diminish as groups work together. Some agencies may become involved in turf protection and fear that cooperation may lead to a loss of funding or staff positions. Existing regulations within agencies, as well as any "red tape" and procedures for handling records, clients, and resources, can restrict the cooperative agreement process. Unavailability of released time for educational staff to work on cooperative efforts, and agency staff turnover are related problems (Tindall, 1982).

Solutions to these problems are addressed in detail in Tindall's (1982) Handbook on Developing Effective Linking Strategies. These noted barriers are an integral part of working out an agreement. Dealing with them creatively can lead to a strong interagency cooperative agreement.

Local level agreements. Local level agreements have also been the subject of some investigation. According to Baumeier, Welsh, and Cook (1976), a local level cooperative agreement should address the following: (1) administrative relationships; (2) referral procedures; (3) service provisions; (4) financial responsibility; (5) method for exchange of information; and (6) functions of operating personnel.

When writing a local level agreement, Tindall (1980) stated that the following should be addressed in detail: (1) each agencies' responsibility under present legislation; (2) how each group interfaces with the other; (3) what services can be expected from each participant; (4) how resources can be most effectively utilized; and (5) the responsibilities that each agency accepts.

Exemplary programs. The literature on transitioning that describes exemplary programs and practices provides both insight and guidance to those involved in transitioning. Ashby and Bensberg (1981) identified ten programs for which interagency cooperation was working well, described them in detail, and discussed their legal and philosophical basis for cooperation.

Of particular interest here are Ballantyne's (1984) findings. These are given in some detail since they may be helpful to those attempting interagency cooperation. In this study nine exemplary programs, both state wide and local, were selected for a field study. Characteristic findings of the programs studied are summarized below.

1. Findings related to planning

   a. The rationale for interagency agreements was to provide improved services. Vocational Rehabilitation was concerned that youth often drop out before they enter the VR system, and when they become clients at a later age they have passed the point of maximum impact. School districts, on the other hand, were interested in coordination in order to increase vocational options for the handicapped students and coordination of services with VR insures continuation of services.

   b. No single model for cooperation was more successful than others. Success depended upon commitment to the cooperative effort and the setting in which it is carried out.

   c. The recognition of the necessity of career education for special education students was stressed rather than a particular level of academic achievement.

   d. Written guidelines delineated roles and responsibilities of participating agencies and all parties viewed the collaboration as necessary.

   e. Participating agencies contributed equal shares of resources.

   f. Interagency in-services were part of the collaborative effort.

   g. A person or interagency committee at both the state and local level was responsible to oversee programs and provide support to cooperative efforts. Each participating agency also assigned a staff person to be responsible for cooperative efforts.

2. Findings related to administrative structure

   a. Participating agencies did not have to be a part of the same umbrella agency or department for success.

b. Recognition for the need for a coordinator in maintaining the collaborative effort was universal. When this role was not filled, participants tended to get caught up in their own agency needs.

c. Development of state level interagency agreements was not essential to success of cooperative efforts. However, when one did exist it was important that it be flexible and preserve local initiative.

3. Findings related to vocational assessment and IEP/IWRP development

a. Vocational assessment was an area of confusion and concern to many educational personnel. School assessment was conducted in order to develop IEP objectives. Assessment was again provided by VR in order to determine appropriate services. No standardization of tests or procedures was found and several programs were attempting to address this problem.

b. The vocational segment of the IEP varied considerably from site to site. For the majority of sites, special education personnel were primarily responsible in coordinating with other agencies for the vocational portion of the IEP. Most sites attempted some coordination between development of the IEP and the IWRP, and in some instances they were attached.

4. Findings related to programming

a. Competency-based programs provided needed flexibility.

b. Cooperative efforts resulted in increased special education student participation in vocational education.

c. Provision of work experience for handicapped students was the focal point of successful programs. In the most well-developed work experience programs, work experience placement was part of the continuum of vocational services.

Post-school adjustment of the transition population. The most recent research efforts regarding transitioning have begun to focus on issues related to the post-school adjustment of special education students. Hasazi, Gordon, and Roe (1985) noted that most studies of this kind were conducted in the 1960's and 1970's to study the impact of vocational education, but prior to the inclusion of many more handicapped students in public school programs. The recent Hasazi et al., publication has marked a change from an emphasis on the interagency process itself to the effectiveness of transitioning programs for students. Edgar (1985) emphasized that Hasazi, Gordon, and Roe have brought to the forefront issues related to the desired outcomes of special education, how these outcomes are to be evaluated, and what the relationship between curriculum and post-school adjustment should be.

Hasazi et al., reported the findings of a follow-up study of 462 students in the state of Vermont. Fifty-five percent (55%) of the sample were in paid jobs at the time of the interview. However, only 67% of these were full-time. Of the employed, 83% found jobs on their own or with the help of family or friends. Only 33% of the females sampled were employed. There was a significant association between current employment status and vocational education. For those students who had vocational education, 61% were currently employed, compared with only 45% of those who had no vocational education.

The relationship of summer jobs, school-year part-time jobs, and work experience school programs with current employment status was significant. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of those who had nonsubsidized jobs while a student were employed, compared with only 46% of those who had subsidized summer jobs, and only 37% of those students who had no summer jobs. High school work experience, per se, did not correlate significantly with employment. In terms

of agency contacts that were made for assistance in seeking employment, 65% to 96% of the youth reported no contact at all.

Another very recent study, reported by Fardig, Algozzine, Schwartz, Hensel, and Westling (1985), addressed the employment status of mildly handicapped rural students. Fardig et al., found that the highest grade completed in high school was the best predictor of post-school adjustment. Mathematics and reading skills were also found to predict employment success. Although most students performed below grade level in school, it was found that they obtained and maintained competitive employment and functioned successfully after leaving school. Finally, the authors concluded that there was no real relationship between the type of vocational programming offered and actual job placement.

Both of the above follow-up studies stress the need for replication and additional investigation of factors influencing post-school adjustment. Edgar (1985) reaffirms the need to continue to track former special education students in order to evaluate, define, and monitor the effectiveness of the human service system. He further notes that this is critical in order to refine and develop school curriculum, but also to certify that special education is in fact productive and delivers in terms that can be considered cost effective.

Summary. The successful transitioning of disabled adolescent students from public school programs to community life and the world of work is of paramount concern to educators. This process is facilitated by interagency cooperative efforts which maximize community resources and provide work experiences for students before they exit from the school system, while developing a continuum of services as the students enter adulthood.

The present study was designed to identify and describe transitioning programs in northern Arizona. Public school personnel and vocational

rehabilitation counselors were interviewed in order to: (1) obtain information on the types of vocational training and work experience offered to high school students in northern Arizona; (2) describe the nature of the interagency cooperative efforts utilized by agency personnel to promote effective transitioning; (3) determine the distribution of handicapped students being served across disability categories; (4) identify barriers to effective transitioning; and (5) make recommendations for improving interagency cooperative efforts in northern Arizona.

METHOD

Sample

The sample consisted of 38 respondents from public high schools and vocational rehabilitation offices in northern Arizona.

Public school sample. Thirty-two (32) public high schools were identified across northern Arizona. Each high school was contacted in the Spring of 1985 by phone in order to identify whether or not they had a transitioning program for handicapped high school students. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the districts reported that they had some type of transitioning activities for their high school population, while 63% reported that they currently had no transitioning program in their district.

A total of 26 school respondents from 14 school districts were then selected to participate in a face-to-face interview with school personnel regarding their program. Three criteria were identified and considered in the selection of school districts to be sampled: (1) size of district; (2) geographic distribution of study sample across northern Arizona; and (3) the existence or non-existence of a transitioning program.

School districts were identified by size based on school population; that is, they were categorized as small (500 students or less), medium (500 to 1000

students), or large (more than 1000 students. As Table 1 indicates, 18 of the schools in northern Arizona are small, 10 are medium sized, and 4 are large districts, according to our criteria. In selecting the schools to be interviewed, an attempt was made to establish a sample that roughly approximated the distribution of schools within each size category. The final sample was composed of 43% small districts, 36% medium districts, and 21% large districts.

In addition, the geographic distribution of the schools in the study sample was spread across northern Arizona in order to minimize the effects of a variance in the availability of resources to districts (refer to Figure 1). Finally, schools were initially selected for inclusion in the sample based on whether or not they had transitioning programs in their districts, such that 50% of the districts interviewed would have programs, while 50% of those interviewed would describe why they were not operating a transitional program. The final sample, however, consisted of 11 districts with some type of special vocational program for handicapped students, and only 3 districts who upon interviewing were identified as having no program at all related to vocational training of handicapped students. It was determined that the use of the word "transitioning" and descriptions of interagency coordination of services had led many districts to identify themselves as doing nothing in this area, when in actuality vocational training and job experience is occurring in most districts, most often without interagency interactions. As Table 2 indicates, there appeared to be no significant difference between schools of varying sizes and their ability to offer transitional services.

The individuals within the school district who were targeted to be interviewed were special education personnel and program administrators. Because of the size of some of the districts and the dual responsibilities many individuals have, the school respondents also included school psychologists and counselors (see Table 3).

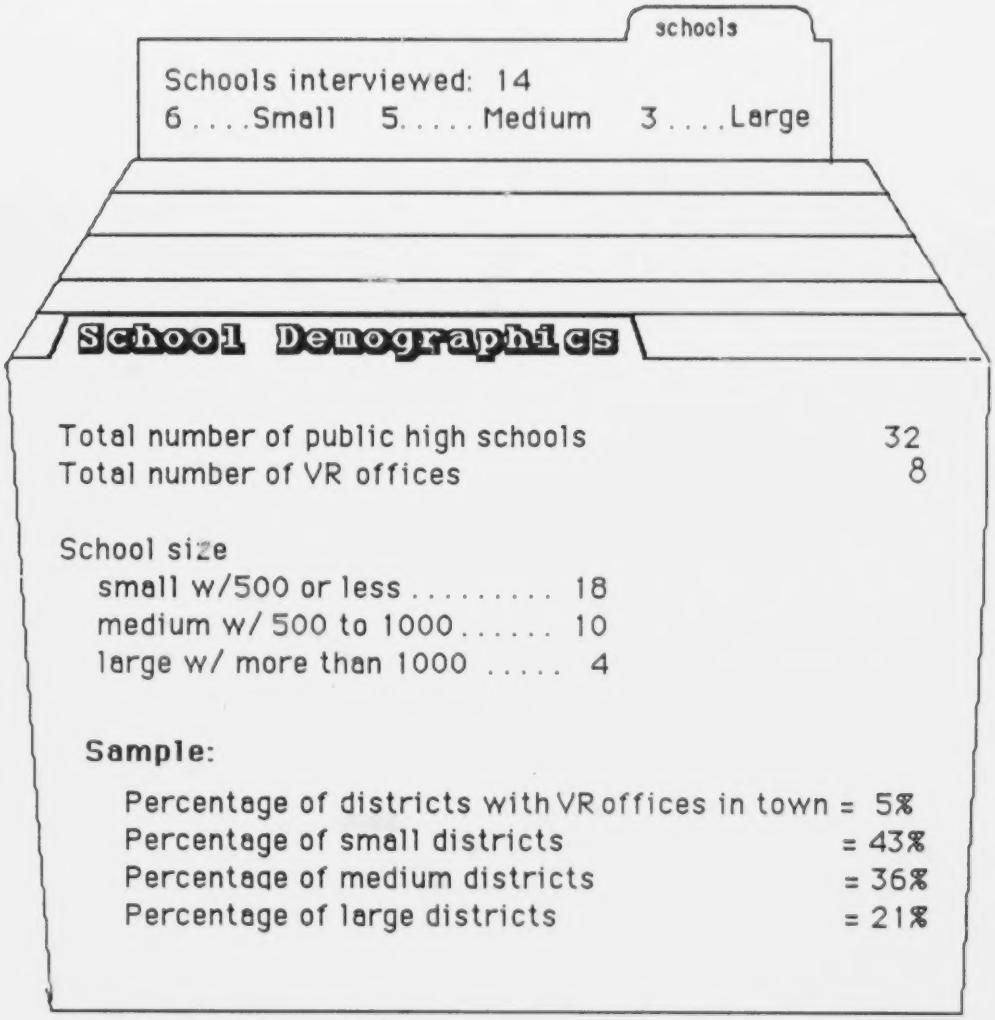

schools
Schools interviewed: 14
6 . . . .Small 5. . . . . Medium 3 . . . .Large
School Demographics
Total number of public high schools 32
Total number of VR offices 8
School size
small w/500 or less 18
medium w/ 500 to 1000 10
large w/ more than 1000 4
Sample:
Percentage of districts with VR offices in town = 5%
Percentage of small districts = 43%
Percentage of medium districts = 36%
Percentage of large districts = 21%

Table 1

Mohave
Fredonia
Page
Monument Valley
Apache
Red Mesa
Tuba City
Navajo
Chinle
Coconino
Ft. Defiance
Ganado
Window Rock
Holbrook
Winslow
Flagstaff & Coconino H.S.
Sanders
Seligman
Kingman
Joseph City
Williams
Ashfork
Riviera
Mingus Union
Bradshaw Mtn.
Camp Verde
Snowflake
St. Johns
Prescott
Bagdad
Mayer
Lake Havasu
Showlow
Yavapai
Blue Ridge
Alchesay
Parker
Round Valley
HIGH SCHOOLS OF NORTHERN ARIZONA

Status of Transitional Programs in Districts Interviewed

Type of Program	Frequency	Percentage
No special program	3	22%
Vocational training in school only	0	0%
Training & job placement outside school	1	7%
Supervised job experience	10	71%
Small schools	30 %	
Medium schools	40 %	
Large schools	30 %	

Table 2

Summary of School Respondents

Type	Number	Percentage
Special Educators	10	38 %
School Psychologists	1	4 %
Counselor	1	4 %
Administrator	10	38%
Dual role personnel [a]	4	16%
T O T A L	26	100 %

[a] Individuals with 2 responsibilities: administration and school psychologist, special education, or vocational education

Table 3

Vocational Rehabilitation sample. A total of 12 respondents from the Vocational Rehabilitation Service offices in northern Arizona were interviewed. Personnel from each of the 5 offices in the five counties of northern Arizona, including Blind Services, were included. Personnel from the Navajo Vocational Rehabilitation Project were also interviewed (See Table 4).

Instrumentation

The structured survey instrument was developed by project staff after reviewing instruments used by other projects, and in consultation with the northern Arizona Vocational Rehabilitation regional office staff. Two instruments were developed, one for school district personnel and one for vocational rehabilitation personnel. The nature of the information requested was similar, but modifications were required based on each agency's mandates and policies for services. The instrument was then pilot tested with two districts and underwent final revisions (see Appendix A for a copy of the instrument).

Procedure

The superintendents from the 14 school districts identified for participation in the study were contacted by letter, informed of the purpose of the study, and requested to participate by identifying key school personnel involved in the transitioning of handicapped high school students who could be contacted for face-to-face interviews. All districts but one agreed to participate. The one district who declined had experienced recent staff turnover and no individual could be identified who could discuss their program. That district was replaced with a district of similar size, within the same geographic area.

Upon receiving approval for the district's participation, the designated contact person was called, appropriate individuals for interviewing were identified, and a date was set for an on-site visit to the school for the interviews.

Summary of VR respondents

Type	number	percentage
VR Counselors	8	67 %
VR Supervisors [a]	3	25%
VR Administrators [a]	1	8 %
T o t a l	12	100 %

[a] Includes Navajo Vocational Rehabilitation Program personnel

Table 4

The Regional Program Managers for District III and IV of the Arizona Vocational Rehabilitation Services Administration approved interviews with all the VR counselors in northern Arizona. All counselors but one were interviewed. Difficulty in arranging a time to interview one counselor prevented his participation. Two Coordinators for the Navajo Vocational Rehabilitation Project were interviewed. Appointments were arranged to meet with each counselor on-site for face-to-face interviews. The second author was responsible for conducting all the interviews.

RESULTS

School District Responses

Distribution of disabling conditions. In order to determine the nature of disabling conditions represented in the school population, districts were asked to provide data on the distribution of handicapping conditions across recognized Arizona Department of Education categories. Table 5 summarizes this distribution. The distribution of disabilities reported by districts in northern Arizona appears to represent that reported nationally for all disabling conditions among the school age population.

Several findings are worthy of special note, however. Six districts reported that between 75% to 100% of their handicapped students are learning disabled. All but 1 district reported that they had no visually impaired students, 12 districts indicated that they had no hearing impaired or physically handicapped students, while 9 districts reported no multiply handicapped high school students. It would appear that the more severely impaired students are not being served in their local districts. However, it may also be that in many of the rural communities of northern Arizona the prevalence of these conditions is extremely low; or that the data is an artifact of the testing/diagnostic process. No explanation can be provided for these findings.

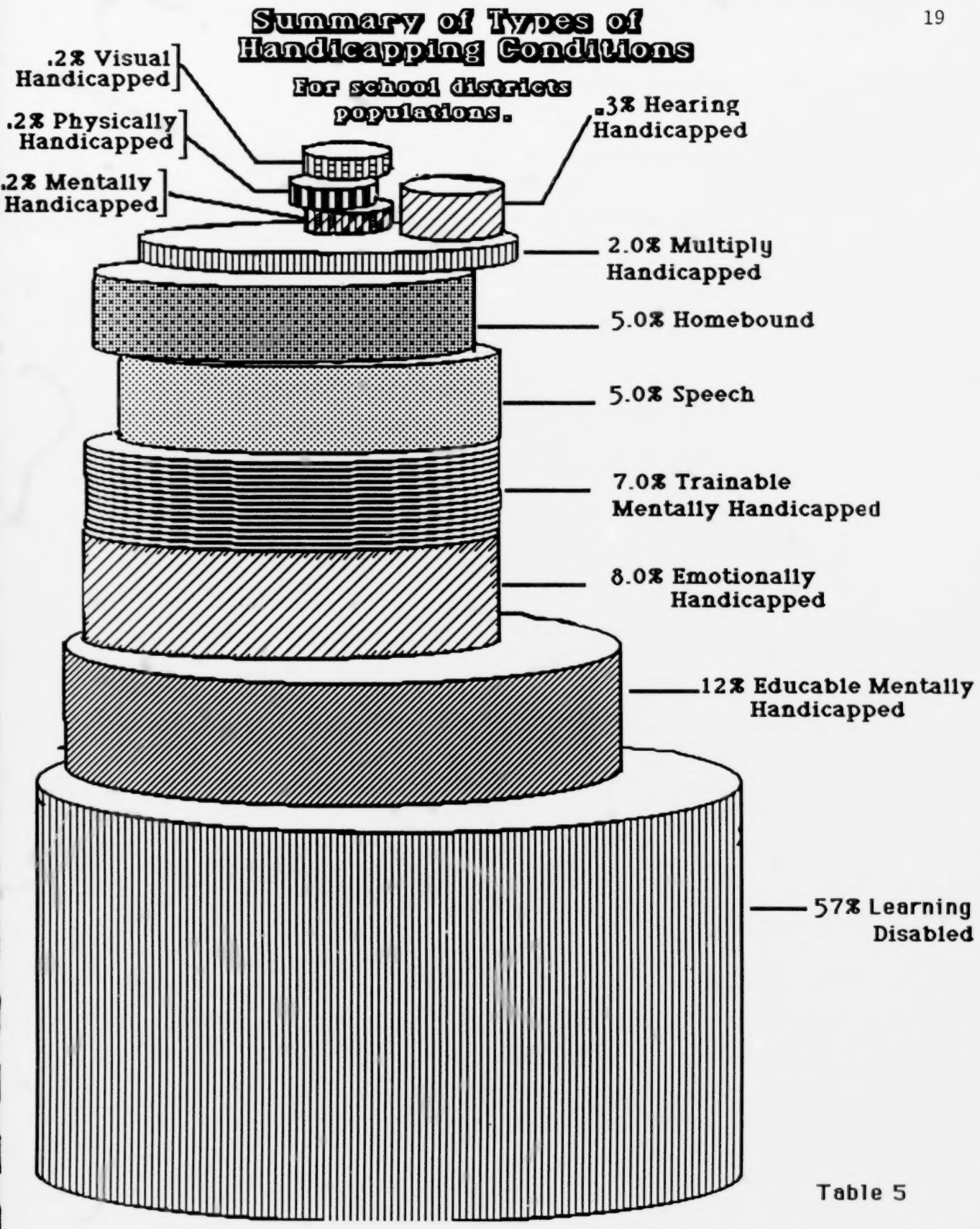

Summary of Types of Handicapping Conditions
For school districts populations.
.2% Visual Handicapped
.2% Physically Handicapped
.2% Mentally Handicapped
.3% Hearing Handicapped
2.0% Multiply Handicapped
5.0% Homebound
5.0% Speech
7.0% Trainable Mentally Handicapped
8.0% Emotionally Handicapped
12% Educable Mentally Handicapped
57% Learning Disabled

Table 5

The second finding related to the distribution of disabling conditions among the high school population is related to a significantly higher reported prevalence of trainable mentally handicapped students in the two districts included in the sample that have over 98% Native American students. A four times greater rate of TMH was reported for this population when compared to the average rate for all other districts. This is indeed alarming. Although one might be tempted to indict the nature of the diagnostic instruments used and the language barriers experienced by this bilingual population during the assessment procedures, the degree of retardation evident in the moderately retarded population would be sufficient to reduce the impact of language assessment barriers in the identification process. Acknowledgement of the poor socioeconomic conditions evident on many reservations would lead one to predict this serious problem (Morgan & O'Connell, 1985). The nature of services available to the TMH Native American population must be further scrutinized.

Vocational programming. Table 6 summarizes a number of questions that were asked regarding the nature of the vocational education programs offered by each district. Although previous literature has emphasized the importance of identifying a coordinator for transitioning activities in order to maximize interagency resources, only half of the districts indicated that such a person had been designated by their district to serve in this capacity.

In regard to the placement options available to the handicapped students, it is not surprising that all the districts reported the availability of regular vocational education programs, since the majority of students being served are learning disabled. However, this also seems to indicate that no special programming is occurring for this handicapped population.

Half of the districts reported some confusion regarding vocational assessments and a lack of training to conduct quality assessments. This is

Nature of Vocational Education Offered

Questions	YES	NO
Staff members identified as responsible for transitioning	57%	43%
Placement Alternative		
Regular Voc. Ed.	100%	0%
Adapted Voc. Ed.	86%	14%
Individualized Voc. Ed.	64%	36%
Special Ed. / Voc. Ed.	93%	7%
Type of Adapted Vocational Education program		
Business and office	64%	
Home Economics	57%	
Technical Education	50%	
Trade and Industrial	64%	
Driver Education	50%	
Minimum Requirement for Voc. Ed.	7%	93%
Expertise in Voc. Assessment	50%	43%
	(7% unsure)	

Table 6

consistent with the national data, which has targeted the area of vocational assessment as one in which greater interagency coordination could occur.

Interagency cooperation. Table 7 summarizes the nature of interagency interactions as reported by the respondents. Less than half of the districts reported any formal or informal agreements with Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Those that indicated interactions with this agency reported informal arrangements had been established, with generally minimal levels of contact.

The agency reported most often by schools as having a consistent strategy for interacting with the schools was the County Guidance Clinics serving many of the districts interviewed. Their interactions are represented by monthly scheduled visits to the district, which are predictable for the school personnel, and an identified contact person within the agency. The Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA) programs were also reported as contributing to the work experiences of the students.

School referral recipient. School personnel were asked to identify the agencies most likely to receive a referral from them requesting services for a student. Table 8 summarizes the percentage of districts reporting that referrals were made to the identified human service agencies. Once again, most referrals from school personnel are going to the Guidance Clinic. This appears to represent a need for counseling services for a growing number of identified emotionally handicapped students. A little over half of the districts reported making referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation. The comments from the respondents seemed to suggest that the school personnel are unclear as to what services VR can offer, and when it is appropriate to refer a school-age student to that agency. Table 9 displays the percentage of schools referring to VR.

In order to determine at what point in the educational process the district personnel were referring students for services from vocational

Interagency Cooperative Services

Type of Agency	Percent of Districts Reporting	
	YES	NO
Vocational Rehabilitation	43%	57%
DES/Developmental Disability	36%	64%
Guidance Clinic	86%	14%
DES/Job Service	35%	65%
JTPA	65%	35%
OJT	7%	93%
AZ Center for Voc. Ed.	36%	64%
Community College	29%	71%

Table 7

Type of Referral Recipient

64.3 % Guidance Clinic

57.0 % Vocational Rehabilitation

28.5 % JTPA

28.5 % DES/DD

14.0 % DES/ Job service

14.0 % Tribal social service

Table 8

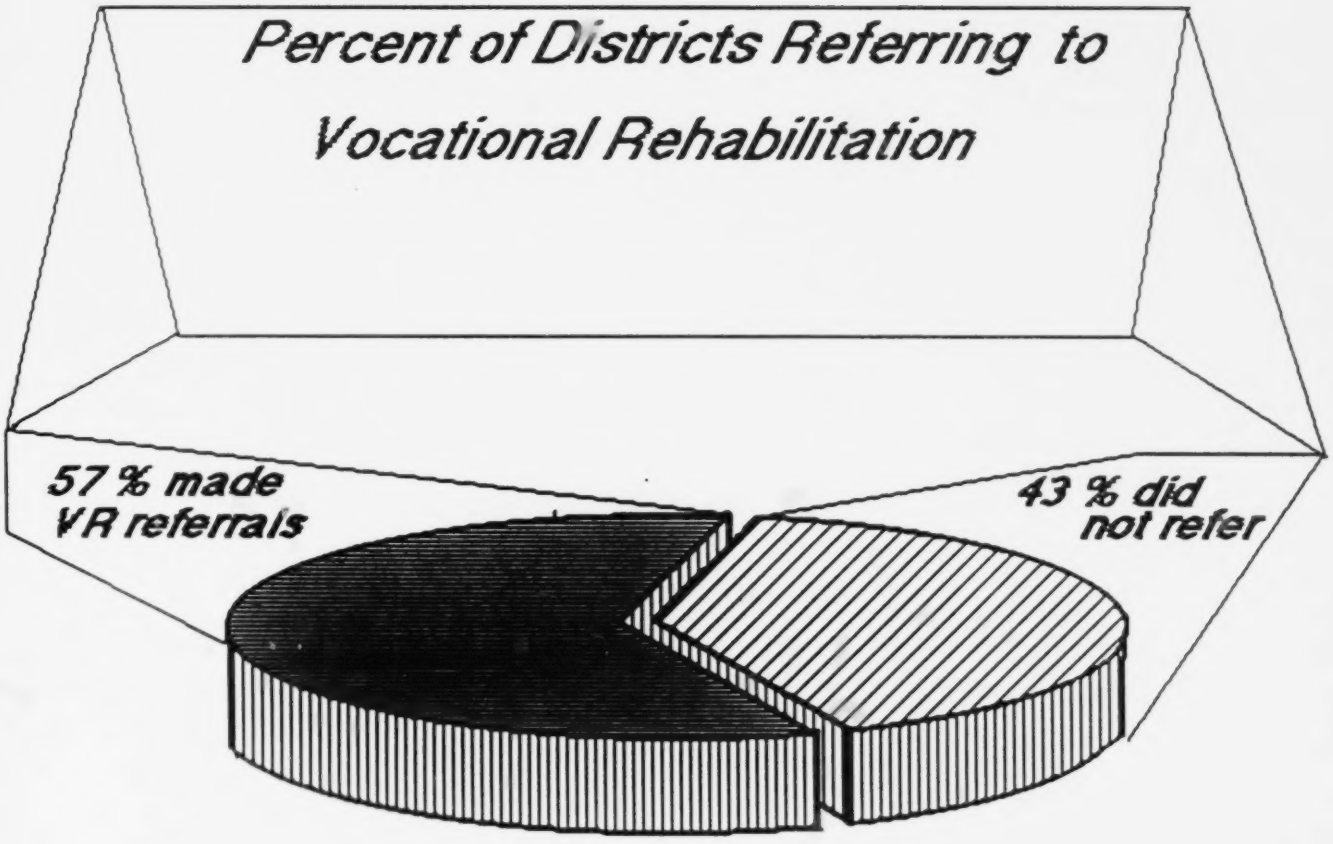
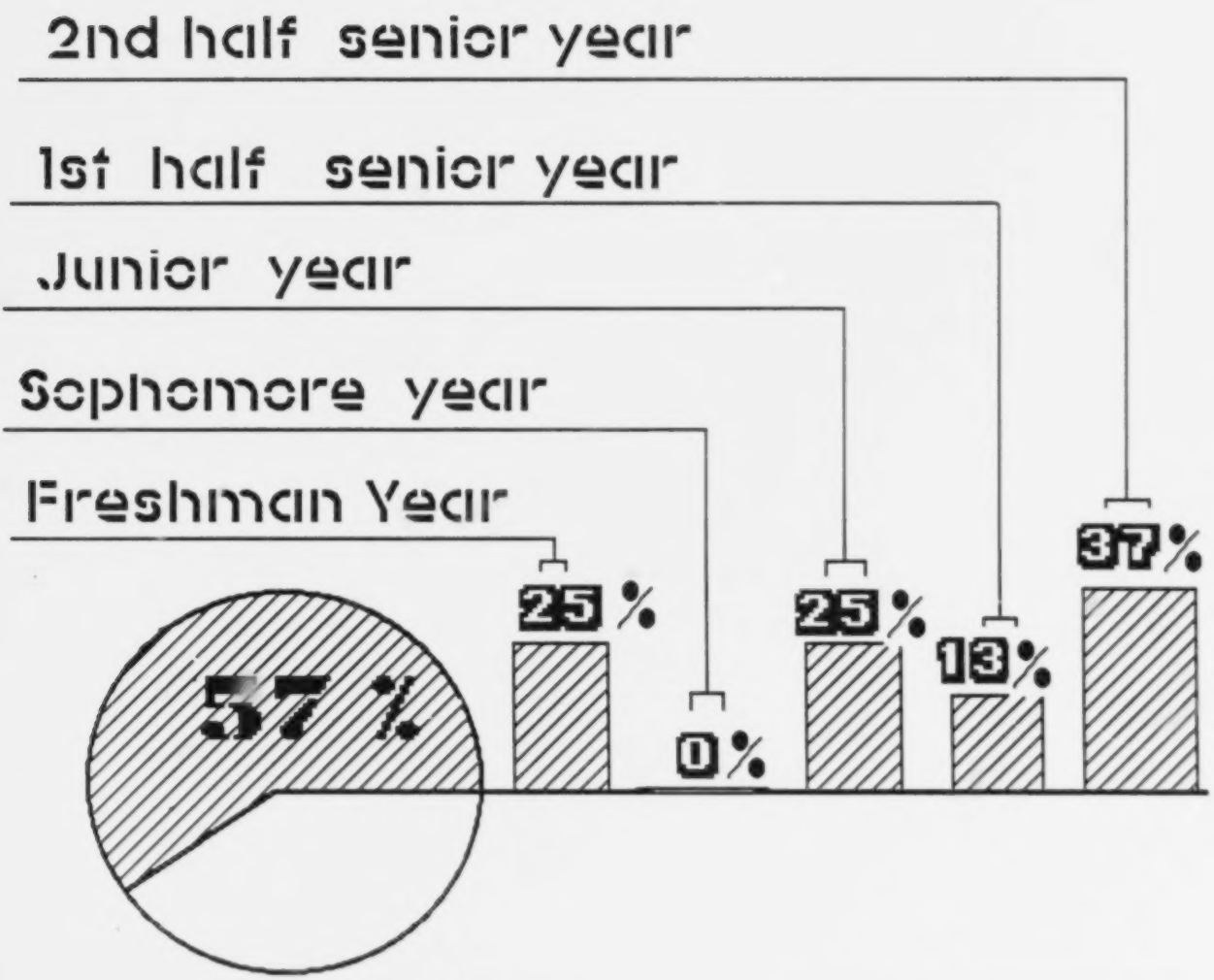

Percent of Districts Referring to
Vocational Rehabilitation
57 % made
VR referrals
43 % did
not refer

Table 9

rehabilitation, respondents were asked to identify the year during high school that they were most likely to refer students. Table 10 shows that of the 57% of the districts making VR referrals, 50% are waiting until the senior year to begin transitioning activities with the VR agency.

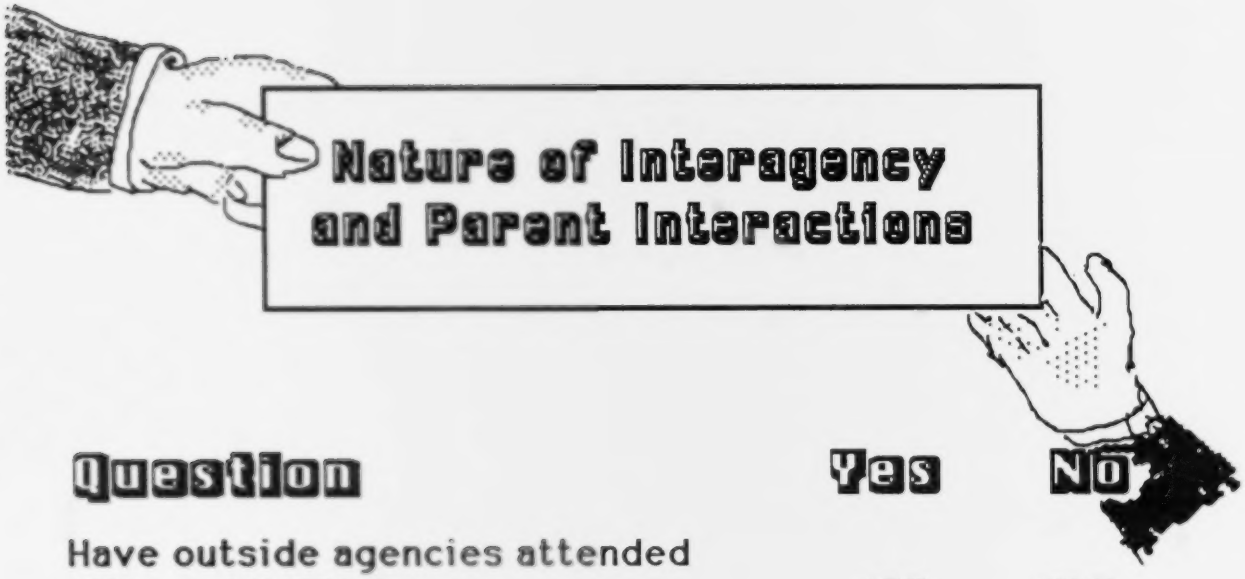
Interagency and parent interactions. Table 11 summarizes the nature of the activities engaged in between the school district personnel and other agencies related to the high school student's vocational program. Most districts have not sought outside participation in IEP and IVEP development and in curriculum development. However, most respondents indicated that student records are exchanged and that very little problems occurred regarding the exchange of information across agencies. In 86% of the districts, parents are systematically informed of the transitional activities between agencies. Actual parent participation at planning meetings other than the mandatory IEP meeting appears to be minimal. There may be a need for districts to consider strategies for increasing parental involvement, especially in light of the fact that previous research has shown the importance of the parents in assisting the handicapped student secure employment upon graduation.

Student Follow-up. Despite the apparent lack of interagency interactions regarding the transitional activities offered by school districts, the districts are experiencing a high degree of success for their handicapped population when measured in terms of post-school employment. Sixty-four percent (64%) of the districts interviewed provided information on the status of their students after leaving high school. Of the districts with this information it was reported that 71% of the high school students were successful in securing employment upon graduation. The responses, however, tended to be oriented toward the special education. Consistent with recent research on post-school status, students with summer high school work experience were employed at a higher rate than students receiving only vocational training (See Table 11a).



When were students referred to Vocational Rehabilitation ?

Table 10



Nature of Interagency and Parent Interactions

Question	Yes	No
Have outside agencies attended IEP's and IVEP's?	43%	57%
Have outside agencies participated in curriculum development?	43%	57%
Do you exchange student records with outside agencies?	71%	29%
Are parents notified of transitional activities	86%	14%
Do parents attend?		
1. IEP meetings	100%	0%
2. Curriculum planning	43%	57%
3. Interagency Inservice	14%	86%

Table 11

Student Follow-up

	Yes	No
Schools who had follow-up information	64 %	36 %

Percentage of students placed in employment upon graduation	71%	29%
Percentage of employed disabled graduates with summer high school work experience	85 %	15%

Table 11a

Summary. School districts in northern Arizona appear to be serving predominately mildly handicapped students in regular vocational education programs. Although very little special programming occurs for this population, and despite the fact that interagency coordination of resources is occurring at a minimal level, districts are reporting a high degree of success in post-school employment status of their handicapped population. Students are receiving vocational training and supervised job experiences. In some of the small districts the more severely handicapped students appeared to benefit from a fewer number of students and individual school personnel initiative which resulted in community-based job experience with successful job placement within the community upon graduation.

Vocational Rehabilitation Responses

Transitional population served. In order to determine the number of students between the ages of 16 and 21 that had received services from VR during the 1984-85 year, the two district offices were requested to provide information on the total client population for each VR office and the total number of clients served within the target age range. As Table 12 indicates, only one to three clients between the ages of 16-21 were reported as served by VR during the 1984-85 year. No students between the ages of 16-18 were served. This clearly reflects the need to increase the interactions with the local school districts, improving the referral process and an understanding of the nature of services that VR can provide to this population while they are still in school.

Interactions with schools. The VR counselors were requested to respond to questions similar to those of the school district personnel regarding their interactions with the schools. Table 13 displays the VR counselor responses. The data from the Navajo Vocational Rehabilitation Project (NVRP) staff was separated from the data of the state agency personnel in order to reflect more

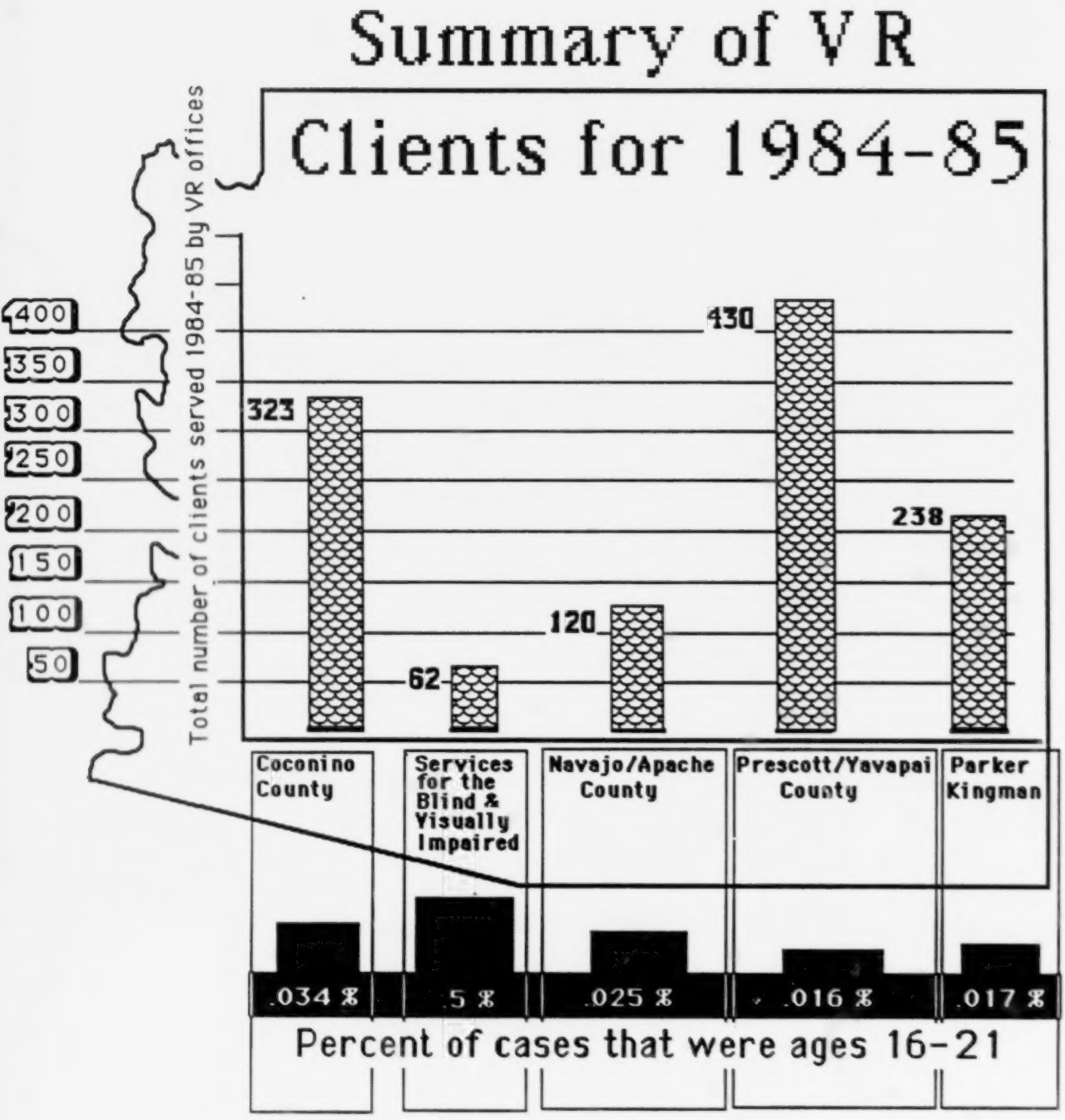

Summary of VR
Clients for 1984-85
Total number of clients served 1984-85 by VR offices
400
350
300
250
200
150
100
50
323
62
120
430
238
Coconino County
Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired
Navajo/Apache County
Prescott/Yavapai County
Parker Kingman
.034 %
.5 %
.025 %
.016 %
.017 %
Percent of cases that were ages 16-21

Table 12

Nature of VR interactions with schools

Question	Yes	No
Do you have a cooperative agreement for transitioning with the high schools ?		
STATE	18%	82%
NVRP	100%	0%
Do you have an identified contact person at the high schools?		
STATE	14%	86%
NVRP	100%	0%
Do you have a regular schedule of contacts with the high schools?		
STATE	0%	100%
NVRP	100%	0%
Do you get school referrals?		
STATE	75%	25%
NVRP	100%	0%

Table 13a

Are referrals received at appropriate time?

STATE	75%	25%
NVRP	100%	0%

Are schools referring appropriately?

STATE	38%	62%
NVRP	50%	50%

Are schools notified of the nature of VR services received?

STATE	[by phone]	50%	50%
NVRP	[in person]	100%	0%

Do you exchange client records?

STATE	100%	0%
NVRP	100%	0%

Are your current interactions with the schools effective?

STATE	40%	40% [a]
NVRP	50%	0%

[a] Ambiguous responses comprise remaining sample

Table 13b

clearly the nature of the interactions described by state VR counselors, eliminating the unique nature of services provided by NVRP.

The VR counselors confirmed the information provided by the district personnel in that very little interactions were reported between the VR offices and the schools, other than as recipients of district referrals. Interestingly, most VR counselors felt that they are receiving the referrals at an appropriate time, which was during the senior year, as reported by 50% of the districts making referrals. The VR counselors did note, however, some concern with the appropriateness of the district referrals and it seemed to indicate that district personnel were unclear as to the VR mandate for serving disabled individuals. Less than half of the counselors felt that their current interactions with the school districts are effective.

Respondent's Awareness of VESPERS

Both school personnel and VR counselors were asked about their level of awareness of the state level formal agreement for interagency coordination of services, known as the VESPERS document. For the school personnel, there was a higher level of awareness of state-wide activities among the administration, but it did not appear that this information was being passed on to the district staff involved in the actual delivery of transitioning services (See Table 14). For the most part, VR personnel appear to be more familiar with the VESPERS document and state-level efforts at transitioning. Almost all respondents felt they could benefit from increased interagency cooperation.

Summary. Vocational Rehabilitation counselors need to provide school districts with information regarding the agency's mandates and policies, and begin to encourage appropriate referral of students early in the vocational planning process. School personnel could benefit from the vocational expertise and training of vocational rehabilitation counselors, particularly in areas of vocational assessment and vocational planning.

Arizona Vocational Rehabilitation Responses

School's Respondent's Awareness of VESPERS

Question	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Are you familar with state level efforts to promote interagency cooperation in transitioning ?				
Administration	71.4 %	28.6 %	100%	0%
Staff	30.0 %	70.0 %		
2. Have you participated in meetings fostering interagency cooperation?				
Administration	35.7%	64.3 %	45%	55%
Staff	40.0%	60.0 %		
3. Are you familar with the VESPERS document?				
Administration	50.0%	50.0%	95%	5%
Staff	30.0%	70.0%		
4. Do you feel you would benefit from increased interagency cooperation?				
Administration	100.0%	0%	90%	10%
Staff	80.0%	10.%		
(not sure)		10.%		

Table 14

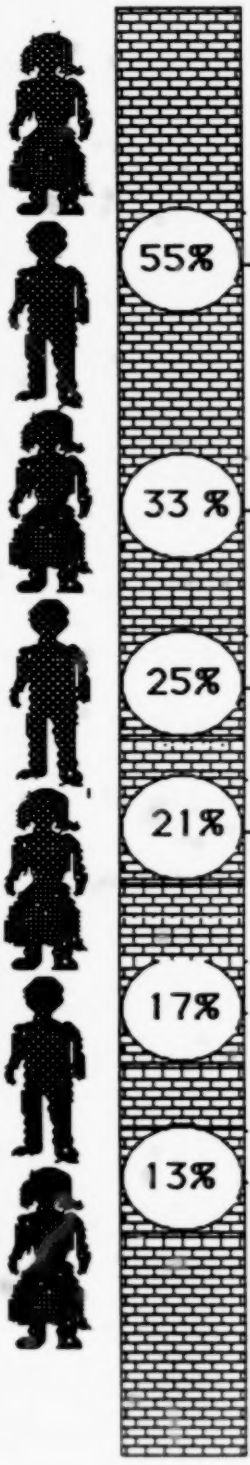
Barriers to Transitioning

All of the respondents in the survey were asked to identify barriers to successful transitioning programs for high school students who are disabled. Table 15 and 16 summarize the areas identified by the highest frequency of respondents for the school personnel and vocational rehabilitation counselors, respectively. Over 50% of school personnel indicated that a lack of jobs in the local areas of the student's residence was a major barrier to employment. This is not surprising, given the unemployment rates currently evident in rural communities. What was surprising, however, is that 45% of the school personnel did not identify the lack of jobs as a barrier to vocational training. Based on respondents' discussions, there are communities in northern Arizona that rely heavily on tourism, resulting in a reliance on service occupations for community employment opportunities. These occupations are characterized by low entry skills and high turnover. Many of the school personnel indicated that they had an abundance of job placements for their handicapped population.

As Table 15 indicates, school personnel mentioned the need for increased interagency participation in transitioning in order to address many of their perceived barriers.

The vocational counselors, however, identified the unavailability of post-secondary training opportunities as the major barrier to successful vocational training and transitioning. Training in many occupational areas must be done outside of northern Arizona, and students are reticent to relocate. Also, the counselors voiced concerns regarding the degree of vocational preparation of students and their understanding of the skills and motivation required for securing and keeping a job.

Lastly, a small percentage of both groups of respondents identified the need for increasing parental understanding of the vocational needs of their handicapped student.



Barriers To Transitioning Identified By Schools

55% — 1. Lack of jobs in local area.

33 % — 2. Inflexibility of agencies in applying criteria for eligibility and services offered.

25% — 3. Geographic isolation, making agencies inaccessible.

21% — 4. Non school agencies present expectations and directives but fail to cooperate in achieving school goals.

5. Schools lack time and money to reach out to agencies.

6. Lack of public transportation and high housing costs make it difficult for training and living independently.

17% — 7. Failure to identify school entity and agency personnel to maintain ongoing cooperation.

13% — 8. Lack of post-secondary training in the local areas.

9. Failure of families and community to understand student needs, limitations and abilities.

10. Students are too immature.

Table 15

Barriers Identified by Vocational Rehabilitation

58%

50%

33%

25%

16%

1. There is a severe lack of post-secondary opportunity for training in Northern Arizona and relocation for training is usually required.
2. Students lack the motivation to seriously seek the needed training or seek a job.
3. Students lack the basic living and work adjustment skills necessary for job preparation.
4. Resources (Schools and VR) are limited and they have to get where they will be best utilized.
5. Many referrals that maybe more appropriately served by other agencies.
6. The mandate to serve clients who have a reasonable expectation for competive employment limit access by severely impaired and long term clients.
7. Parents are resistant to children leaving home for the necessary training.
8. People need to be informed about one another's roles and responsibilities at the local level.
9. Schools provide inadequate information about students.
10. Schools fail to make referrals - they fear loosing their territory.

Table 16

DISCUSSION

The results of this survey of transitioning programs in northern Arizona indicate that interagency coordination of services is in its infancy. The respondents showed an increased awareness of the vocational and occupational needs of their handicapped students, but the district and agency resources and programming in this area could benefit from increased interagency efforts.

There is some concern regarding the nature of the population being served and identified for services. Neither the schools nor VR indicated an awareness of the vocational training needs of the severely handicapped. Indeed, based on the student characteristics of the school population, there are very few severely handicapped students in the public schools of northern Arizona. No explanation can be provided regarding this phenomenon. Whether it can be attributed to a very low incidence of severely disabling conditions for this region, out-of-district placement, or problems in diagnosis is unknown at this time. Nationally, however, there are efforts underway to provide for supported employment of severely disabled adults in order to facilitate their contributions to their local communities and quality of life.

It would appear that the emphasis in northern Arizona is placed on the very mildly handicapped, and in particular, the learning disabled student. Because of the less severe nature of the disabling condition for this population, however, schools are by and large serving the LD student in their regular vocational training programs, and very little special programming is occurring. Upon graduation, this group of students disappears successfully into the mainstream of the community. Caution may need to be taken, however, to insure that this large population of disabled adults is not resurfacing at a later age because of difficulties maintaining employment. Because their "transitioning" is being assumed to be successful, little special programming is occurring, and indeed, the period of maximum impact passes before problems develop.

The data suggest a number of recommendations that can be given to begin to increase interagency coordination of services and improve transitioning for high school disabled students in northern Arizona. It is imperative that human service agencies clarify their mandates and policies regarding services to disabled adolescents and the use of agency resources for transitioning activities. The Arizona state VESPERS document should provide an understanding of the state level agreement between agencies, and counselors, case managers, and school personnel should have a basic understanding of the various agency roles in this process.

Personnel from each agency should conduct in-service training workshops within their local catchment area to inform service providers about their agency's mandates and policies. School personnel need to have a better understanding of the resources available from other agencies and increase their efforts at accessing these resources in an appropriate and timely manner. In order to facilitate the exchange of information and resources, the school districts should designate one contact person who is responsible for coordinating interagency activities, so that human service agency personnel know who to contact and where to begin their interactions. Vocational rehabilitation counselors should establish a consistent pattern of interactions with the school districts and begin a pattern of contacts that is often enough to allow a relationship to develop that results in increased participation on their part in the student's vocational plan, thus maximizing the appropriateness of high school vocational training and eventual job placement.

All personnel working with disabled students with vocational goals in mind should begin to increase the parental participation during the student's educational program. Parents need to increase their knowledge and understanding of their child's vocational needs and assist the school district and VR counselors in insuring the success of the student's vocational plan, resulting in job placement.

Lastly, school districts and participating human service agencies may want to consider establishing a northern Arizona network of summer jobs for disabled high school students. Recent research is indicating that non-subsidized summer job training and experience is a major predictor of job success after high school. Because many rural communities in northern Arizona lack jobs for this population, yet other communities appear to have a sufficient number of job opportunities, a summer program through a regional network may facilitate transitional efforts, maximize interagency coordination and increase the success of the agencies in insuring that the disabled individual becomes a contributing member of their community and establishes a quality of life that human service providers can be proud of.

Recommendations

1. Agency administrators clarify policies on transitioning services.

2. School districts designate a contact person.

3. VR counselors conduct inservice with districts in their area.

4. Vocational Assessment should be coordinated.

5. Increase parental involvement.

6. VR counselors establish pattern of interaction with schools.

7. Provide earlier referrals.

8. Establish network of nonsubsidized summer jobs.

Table 17

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APPENDIX A

Institute for Human Development

Special Needs Students in Transition

Staff Interview Form

Date_____

Person Interviewed_____

Position_____Time in Position_____

School_____

Address_____

_____

Telephone_____

The purpose of the Survey of Special Needs Students in Transition is ot gather information on activities of High Schools in Northern Arizona in helping their special needs students move form school to work. This interview will help us look at existing services, develop a profile of barriers to successful transitioning and identify possible solutions to these problems. The information you provive will be used to develop strategies which schools and Vocational Rehabilitation can use to smooth the transition process for special needs students.

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1.0 Program — Describe your procedures and give an overall picture of your program.

1.1 From the following check all programs offered at this time.
Programs available to handicapped students.
Programs in which there are handicapped students.

none	
_____	none
_____	agricultural education
_____	business and office education
_____	health occupations
_____	home economics
_____	technical education
_____	trade and industrial
_____	driver education
_____	work adjustment training
_____	work experience placements
_____	job counseling
_____	job placement service
_____	vocational assessment
_____	other (specify)

1.2 What placement options are available to special needs students?

	Available	Often	Seldom
a) Regular Voc Ed	_____	_____	_____
b) Adapted Voc Ed	_____	_____	_____
c) Individualized Voc Ed (employer and special ed directly involved)	_____	_____	_____
d) Special Ed/Voc Ed			

1.3 Is adapted Voc Ed available for the following:

	yes	no
a) agricultural education	_____	____
b) business and office ed.	_____	____
c) health occupations	_____	____
d) home economics	_____	____
e) technical education	_____	____
f) trade and industrial	_____	____
g) driver ed.	_____	____

1.4 What year does Voc. Ed. training begin for handicapped?

1.5 Is there a minimum academic criteria that must be met before job training begins? _____

If yes, what is that criteria?_____

1.6 At what point does the emphsis shift to Vocational Training?

1.7 Are handicapped students currently involved in work experience placements? Yes No

____ ____

If yes, list the typr of job placement and students enrolled by number and catagory:

Placement	Number	Catagory

List work sites available to special handicapped students:

1.8 What staff member is responsible for supervision of handicapped students in work experience placements?

1.9 Who is responsible for developing sites for work experience placements for handicapped students?

1.10 How are vocational assessments obtained?
a)within the district_____
b)with the assistance of VR_____
c)Other (specify)_____

1.11 What kinds of vocational assessments are obtained?
a) MESA System_____
b) Valpar Assessment package_____
c) Strong Vocational Interest Inventory_____
d) World of Work_____
e) Other (specify)_____

1.12 Do you feel your program has adequate expertise to conduct vocational assessments? Yes ____ No ____

2.0 Interagency Cooperation

2.1 Do you receive support or cooperation from any of the following agencies?

a) Vocational Rehabilitation

b) Behavioral/Mental Health

c) DES/DD

d) Center for Vod Ed

e) Job Services / JPTA / OJT

f) Community College/University

g) Private agencies serving the handicapped (specify)

h) Other

2.2 Do you refer students to any of the above agencies?

Yes	No	Agency	Catagory	Frequency

2.3 Who is responsible for making student referrals to outside agencies?_____

2.4 If referrals are made to VR, when are they made?

a) Prior to freshman year_____
b) Freshman Year_____
c) Sophmore Year_____
d) Junior Year_____
e) First half od senior year_____
f) Last half of senior year_____
g) Upon graduation_____

2.5 Do you meet with outside agencies Yes____ No_____
If yes, with which agencies do you meet and why?

Agency	Purpose	Frequency

2.6 Have you had or attended any interagency In-service training?
Yes_____ No_____ Agency_____ Frequency_____

2.8 Have representatives of outside agencies ever attended IEP's IWRP's? Yes_____ No_____
Agency_____Frequency_____

How many handicapped students had outside agency representation at their IEP/IWRP meetings this year?_____

2.9 Has any outside agency participated in curriculum development planning for handicapped students?
Yes_____ No_____ Agency_____

2.10 Do you exchange students secondary records withany other agency during the transition period?
Yes_____ No_____ Agency_____

2.11 Are parents notified of transitional activities?
Yes_____ No_____

2.12 Do parents participate in any of the following:
a) IEP/IWRP_____
b) Curriculum planning meetings_____
c) Interagency In-service_____
d) Other (specify)_____

2.13 Do you work with a VR counselor? Yes____ No____
Frequency of contacts_____

How was contact first established_____

What services do you receive from your VR counselor:
a) assessment_____
b) student counseling_____
c) job placement_____
d) other (specify)_____

2.14 What services would you like to receive from your VR counselor? Rank responses.

a) IEP/IWRP participatiom_____
b) curriculum planning_____
c) case management_____
d) vocational assessment_____
e) student counseling_____
f) transportation_____
g) special equipment_____
h) job analysis_____
i) incentive allowances_____
j) other (specify)_____

2.15 Do you feel your program is adequately meeting the needs of handicapped students entering transition?

Yes____ No____ Explain_____
_____
_____

2.16 Do you feel you have the cooperation you need to assist handicapped students in the transition process from:

a) administration_____
b) special education staff_____
c) vocational education staff_____
d) vocational rehabilitation_____
e) DES/DD_____
f) Mental Health_____
g) Other (specify)_____

3.0 Student Follow Up

3.1 Number of handicapped students graduated last year_____

3.2 Of those, number successfully placed in employment upon graduation?_____

3.3 Of the handicapped students placed, how many were employed by their work experience worksite? _____

3.4 Of those students placed, how many were employed in fields for which they hjad been prepared in High School?

Position	School Training	Student Catagory

3.5 Of those students placed upon graduation, how many had secured summer employment while in high school?_____

3.6 What is the current status of those handicapped students graduated last year and not employed?

a) not involved in work or training_____
b) sheltered workshop or other unpaid employment_____
c) involved in continuing education_____
d) status unknown_____
e) other_____

3.7 What are the major problems for special education graduates?

Problem	Solution

4.0 Interagency Cooperative Efforts

4.1 Are you familiar with state level efforts to promote interagency cooperation in transitioning handicapped students? Yes____ No_____

4.2 Have you participated in area meetings fostering interagency cooperation? Yes _____ No_____

4.3 Are you familiar with the VESPERS document? Yes____ No_____

4.4 Do you feel your school would benefit from increased interagency cooperation? Yes___ No_____

4.6 What are the major barriers faced by the school as an agency in working with other agencies?

Barriers Solutions

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Institute for Human Development

Special Needs Students in Transition

Vocational Rehabilitation Interview Form

Date_____

Person Interviewed_____

Position_____

Time in Position_____

Office_____

Address_____

_____

The purpose of the Survey of Special Needs Students in Transition is to gather information on activities of High Schools and Vocational Rehabilitation Offices in Northern Arizona in helping special needs students move from school to work. This interview will help us look at existing services, develop a profile of barriers to successful transitioning and identify possible solutions to these problems. The information you provide will be used to develop strategies which schools and Vocational Rehabilitation can use to smooth the transition process for special needs students.

1.0 Local Cooperative Efforts

Please describe your activities in assisting young adults enter the workforce.

1.1 Do you have a cooperative working agreement with the High Schools in your area?

School	Yes	No

If an agreement exists is it:
formal (written)_____
informal (mutually agreed upon but unwritten)_____
currently being developed (explain)_____
_____
_____

1.2 Do you have a contact person at the high school? Yes___ No___

If there is a contact person, list :

School	Contact - Position - Frequency

1.3 Do you have a regular schedule for contacts with high schools in your area? Yes_____ No____ Frequency _____

1.4 Do the high schools in your area refer students for Vocational Rehabilitation? Yes____ No____

When are students referred?
Prior to freshman year_____
Freshman year_____
Sophmore year_____
Junior year_____
First half of senior year_____
Last half of senior year_____

Do you feel referrals are made to you at the appropriate time? Yes____ No_____

Do you feel the schools are referring all students who would benefit from VR referrals? Yes_____ No_____
Explain_____
_____
_____
_____

1.5 What services have you provided during the 1984 and/or 1985 school year to students referred to you by the schools?

Service	While enrolled	After leaving school
Evaluation		
Vocational training		
Case management		
Counseling		
Rehabilitation therapy		
Other (specify)		

1.6 Are the schools notified of the services rendered to students referred by them? Yes____ No_____

How is this notification made?
In writing_____
Phone contact_____
Other (explain)_____

1.7 Do you exchange client records - information with the schools during the transition period? Yes____ No____
If yes, are these records: received_____ provided_____

1.8 During the 1984 and/or 1985 school years have you participated in any of the following with the schools?

	1983-84	1984-85	frequency
Informal meetings (explain)			
Formal meetings			
Inter-agency Inservices			

IEP/IWRP meetings_____
Curriculum planning meetings_____

1.9 How was contact with the high schools in your area first established?_____
_____
_____

1.10 Do you feel your current working relationship with the high schools in your area is effective in providing services to students? Yes_____ No_____
Explain_____
_____
_____

1.11 What kinds of problems do you experience with the young disabled population during and after their school training.

Problem Solution

1.12 What barriers do you encounter within your agency procedures, guidelines or requirements that effect your services to clients while they are enrolled in school or of school age?

Problem Solution

1.13 What barriers do you encounter in working with the schools in providing services to school age clients in transition?

Problem | Solution

2.0 State Level Cooperative Efforts

2.1 Are you familiar with state level efforts to promote interagency cooperation in transitioning handicapped students? Yes_____ No_____

2.2 Have you participated in area meeting fostering interagency cooperation? Yes_____ No_____

2.3 Are you familiar with the VESPERS document? Yes____ No_____

2.4 Do you feel your agency would benefit from increased interagency cooperation? Yes_____ No_____